



Association for Leadership Science in Nursing

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An interview with

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Tell us a little about your career path, background, and interest in advancing the science of nursing leadership.

I knew I wanted to be a nurse since I was about 10 years old, though my family had no nurses. Fortunately, a university in my hometown had a BSN program, so I obtained my BSN in nursing from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). My first job as a graduate nurse was as a charge nurse at night for a floor with about 80 beds total on the four units I covered. This was in the late 70s, so thank goodness times have changed. The night supervisor inspired me as a leader. I learned and survived. I left that job and moved into home health. In the early 1980s, I completed an MS in health education from USM and moved to Houston, TX, to complete my internship for that degree. I had the opportunity to work in the Texas Medical Center at two outstanding organizations. I have worked in oncology, critical care, and outcomes management. I completed my MSN in nursing as a clinical nurse specialist in 1994 and my DNP in 2013, both from the University of Texas Health Science Center (UT Health) in Houston. I moved into nursing leadership because of the encouragement I received from some exceptional nurse leaders. In 2017, the organization I was working for underwent a major restructuring with my position being eliminated. I moved into academia and accepted an assistant

professor position at UT Health, where I am now the track coordinator for the MSN in Nursing Leadership track and co-director of the MSN Programs.

How did you hear about ALSN and what has been your experience with this organization? What committee are you a member of?

Debra Fowler and Francine Snow introduced me to ALSN during a membership drive. I attended my first conference in 2019 and knew that I had found my tribe. I am currently a member of the Leadership Succession Committee.

How did you become interested in the study of nursing leadership and how as ALSN influenced this interest?

I have had the opportunity to lead both formally through positions I have held and informally through teams I have been part of. While I've since worked in various nursing roles and positions, I remember those nurse leaders who both inspired and disappointed me. ALSN has helped me be a better leader myself, as well as helped me prepare the next generation of nursing leaders.

One of our goals is to create a better balance between academic and practice partners. What are your thoughts/ideas on how this could be accomplished?

Nursing is a hard profession, and a nurse leader can either make or break a team. By forming academic and practice partners, collaboration can occur so that practice partners get the best evidence available to be better leaders, and academia has a testing ground for leadership approaches to real-world situations. Both groups benefit from the expertise of each other. To do this, we must actively seek opportunities to partner and work collaboratively.

What would you say to nurse leaders in academia or practice who are considering joining ALSN right now?

Just do it. This organization has many networking opportunities; everyone is willing to share ideas and work collaboratively. There is a lot of focus on bedside nurses, but there needs to be that same focus on nursing leaders, and this organization does just that.

What are 3 things that others may not know about you that you would like to share?

1. I grew up on a farm in Mississippi, where I learned to drive in the hay field at 7.
2. My mom and I share the same birthday.
3. I have a Belgian Malinois named Keeper and volunteer for the American Belgian Malinois Rescue organization.